

## **FACT SHEET**

San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site, Harris County, Texas  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, August 2012

### **BACKGROUND:**

The San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site (Site) is located east of the City of Houston between two unincorporated areas (Channelview and Highlands) in Harris County, Texas. The Site consists of a set of impoundments approximately 14 acres in size, built in the mid-1960s for disposal of paper mill pulp wastes, and the surrounding areas containing sediments and soils potentially contaminated with the waste materials. The paper mill sludge, containing dioxins and furans, was barged to the Site from the now closed Champion Paper Mill that had been located in Pasadena, Texas. The set of impoundments is located on a partially submerged 20-acre parcel of real estate on the western bank of the San Jacinto River, in Harris County, Texas, immediately north of the Interstate Highway 10 (I-10) Bridge over the San Jacinto River. An additional impoundment is located south of I-10.

Physical changes at the Site in the 1970s and 1980s, including regional subsidence of land in the area due to large scale groundwater extraction have resulted in partial submergence of the impoundments north of I-10 and exposure of the contents of the impoundments to surface waters.

On March 19, 2008, the Site was added to the National Priorities List (NPL) under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund. On November 20, 2009, EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO), to International Paper Company (IPC) and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corporation (MIMC), the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) for the Site. The 2009 UAO directs IPC and MIMC to conduct a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study for the Site. These investigations/studies will characterize the nature and extent of contamination; assess the risks to human health and the environment; evaluate the fate and transport of contaminants; and develop/evaluate potential remedial alternatives for the Site.

A Superfund time-critical removal action was completed in July of 2011 to stabilize the pulp waste material and sediments within the impoundments north of I-10 to prevent the further release of dioxins, furans, and other chemicals into the environment. The removal consisted of placement of an armor rock cap over a geotextile bedding layer and an impermeable geomembrane in some areas. The removal action was completed pursuant to an Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order on Consent signed on May 11, 2010.

Fish consumption advisories are in place for the San Jacinto River due to dioxin and PCB contamination. Persons should limit fish consumption to no more than one 8-ounce meal per month, and children under 12 and pregnant women should not eat any species of fish.

Regarding community involvement issues, the EPA co-leads a Community Advisory Committee concerning Site activities. This committee includes the Texas Commission on Environmental

Quality, Harris County, the Port of Houston, the Houston Galveston Area Council, the Galveston Bay Foundation, and the Potentially Responsible Parties. This committee meets every other month regarding progress at the Site and community issues. The EPA is also participating with the Houston Galveston Area Council to study impacts of discharges to the San Jacinto River and watershed. Finally, a Technical Assistance Grant has been awarded to Galveston Bay Foundation.

#### **CURRENT STATUS:**

The investigation of the Site is continuing. Recent investigations include the sampling of soil, sediment, and ground water in the area south of I-10, as well as sampling of pore water within the armored cap over the waste impoundments.

The Remedial Investigation Report will present the investigation results and is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2013. Following the completion of the investigation phase, a Feasibility Study, which will assess alternative cleanup approaches for the Site, is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2013. The EPA will then prepare a Proposed Plan, which will describe the Site conditions and present a preferred cleanup approach, as well as the other cleanup alternatives considered, for public review and comment. Following the close of the public comment period, the EPA will consider the public comments received and select the final cleanup remedy for the Site in the Record of Decision, which is planned for completion at the end of 2013.

In accordance with the operations, monitoring, and maintenance (OMM) plan for the Site, the Respondents are required to conduct quarterly cap inspections starting January 2012. On July 23, 2012, the EPA received a notification from the Respondents following an inspection regarding erosion that had occurred at several spots on the western berm of the armor cap at the Site. In response to this notification, EPA conducted a Site inspection on July 24, 2012. Subsequently, repair of the cap was completed by the Respondents on August 6, 2012, following EPA approval of the repair plan. Although no visible release of waste was observed, the EPA has asked the US Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a third party review of the overall cap design and construction. Moreover, EPA has requested the Respondents conduct a reassessment of the overall cap design and construction and submit a detailed report about the western cap erosion. The OMM plan includes provisions for cap inspection and repairs following future flood events, and material is stockpiled nearby for any future repair needs.

#### **ENFORCEMENT STATUS:**

Discussions between EPA and Respondents continue regarding potential violations associated with the performance of certain work tasks contained in the EPA-approved schedule and Administrative Order on Consent for the removal action. A meeting between EPA and Respondents is scheduled to occur in Dallas on September 12, 2012.